

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

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ZBA 2010-51
Petition of Federal Realty
161-231 Linden Street (Linden Square)

Pursuant to due notice, the Special Permit Granting authority held a Public Hearing on Thursday, June 17, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall, 525 Washington Street, Wellesley, on the petition of FEDERAL REALTY requesting a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section XXIIA and Section XXV of the Zoning Bylaw for improvement of existing property identification signs, installation of two entry identification monument signs, a community directory board and tenant blade signs along the sidewalk façade, at 161 – 231 LINDEN STREET (LINDEN SQUARE), in an Industrial District and Linden Street Corridor Overlay District.

On June 3, 2010, the Petitioner filed a request for a hearing before this Authority, and thereafter, due notice of the hearing was given by mailing and publication.

Presenting the case at the hearing was Mike Kelleher, Federal Realty (the "Petitioner"). He said that the proposal is to improve the site with landscaping and other changes to improve functionality. He said that also present were Rick Cataffa, Federal Realty, and Rob Adams, Halvorson Design.

Mr. Adams displayed a Powerpoint presentation (retained by proponent).

The Board said that it was concerned about the number of signs. The Board said that it concurred with the Design Review Board's (DRB) recommendations.

The Board asked about the DRB comment for awning color. Mr. Cataffa said that DRB wanted a brighter color rather than black awnings.

The Board asked if all of the proposed wall signs are new. Mr. Cataffa said that they are. He said that when they came out to the property to do a study, they found that the weakness of the property is in the quality of the pedestrian experience. He said that one solution was to address the awnings. He said that they wanted individual tenants to stand out by adding variety to the awnings. He said that combining that with the light fixtures they would be able to better focus on the human scale. He said that the proposal is to introduce high quality blade signs for the tenants to break down the scale of the large building.

Mr. Cataffa said that part of the problem is that more attention was paid to cars in the parking lot than pedestrians on the sidewalk. The Board said that customers will need to see store signs from the parking lot. The Board said that blade signs will encourage pedestrian traffic along the sidewalk. The Board said that the proposed tenant identity is better.

Mr. Cataffa said that there will be a maximum of two signs, one blade sign and one wall sign located on each of the opposite sides of the building near the entrances, per business.

The Board said that it does not want logos or trademarks on the signs. The Board said that the signs should be simple in design and uniform, preferably routed out. The Board said that there shall be only one style of blade sign. The Board said that the signs can only be one shape.

The Board asked why the tenants had to be listed on the entry signs, since Roche Bros. and CVS are visible from the street. Mr. Cataffa said that some of the tenant signs were part of lease agreements. Mike Kelleher said that some of the tenant signs may be eliminated if they are not included in the lease.

The Board said that the size of the entry sign should be scaled down. Mr. Adams said that the intent was to improve the existing conditions. He said that the existing sign is a large wall. He said that they propose to replace it with something that is lighter looking with plant material behind it. He said that the oval portion is approximately 8.5 feet. The Board asked if the linden leaf is necessary. The Board said that it did not like the idea of the lettering "At Wellesley" under the Linden Square lettering. The Board said that the sign should read "Linden Square" only and the linden leaf should be removed.

Mr. Cataffa said that there is no signage on the awnings except for the Cottage where DRB recommended that it be added on the east face. The Board said that there shall be no new signage on awnings. The Board said that existing signage on awnings may remain but cannot be replaced.

Mr. Adams said that there are four existing entry signs. He said that the existing main entry stone wall is approximately five to six feet high. He said that the others are approximately four feet high. Mr. Cataffa said that the problem with the existing signs is that they are visually oppressive. He said that the proposed sign will be less massive. Mr. Adams said that the centerline at the existing "Linden Square" letters is approximately four to five feet tall. He said that the proposed sign is approximately six feet, or one foot taller. He said that they can strive to lower the sign six to eight inches.

The Board said that its concern is not with the style of the sign but with the size. Mr. Adams said that the proposed sign contains the same information as the existing sign. Mr. Cataffa said that the difference is that the information is now on an open grid instead of on a solid wall.

The Board said that a free-standing two-sided community bulletin board located in the sitting area (the square) would be better than the proposed location. Mr. Cataffa said that they were concerned about having too many permanent features in the limited space for the sitting area. The Board said that the bulletin boards could be located at the entryways. Mr. Adams said that they would pursue suitable options for placement of the bulletin boards.

John Smitka, 4 Highland Road, said that he is an abutter to Linden Square. He said that anything that will soften the look of Linden Square is welcome. He said that on the south side there is a sign with an Ace Hardware logo that is quite visible from the street. The Board said that it has never allowed logos on office buildings, from Wellesley Office Park out to Wellesley College. The Board said that it did not review that particular sign but will ask the Building Inspector if the sign complies with the bylaw.

Mr. Smitka asked about branding the area as Linden Square. He cited Patriot Place as an example of a cookie cutter early century view of what a commercial establishment is supposed to look like. He asked what the business purpose would be for the entry signs.

Mr. Cataffa said that given the size of the property and the fact that it is spread out on two sides of the street, the intention was to simplify identification of the entry points. He said that they wanted to unify the property in a simple format.

Mr. Smitka said that the Board had stated that most people driving down Linden Street know where they are going and do not need a large sign to direct them to Linden Square. He asked if there will be an entry sign by the Linden Store. Mr. Adams said that the existing sign will remain. Mr. Smitka said that it does not make sense to have more signage directing traffic into Linden Square.

Mr. Cataffa said that the intention was also to improve cross shopping for the pedestrian. He said that they reduced the radii of the curbs at the intersection to help the pedestrian feel a closer relationship to the shops across the street. He said that they wanted to create the feel that this is all part of the same center. The Board said that it is not a mall and pedestrians will have to cross a main thoroughfare.

Mr. Cataffa said that they are trying to make Linden Square a pedestrian friendly entity. Mr. Smitka said that making the site more pedestrian friendly with the blade signs is a good idea. He said that he did not see the necessity of branding Linden Square because it is not a destination shopping area. The Board said that Linden Square is a destination for people who come from surrounding towns to go to Roche Bros., The Cottage and Beacon Hill Sports. Mr. Smitka said that those people know where they are going. He said that a branded shopping destination is not consistent with the image that he has of Wellesley. He said that he has lived here since 1976. The Board said that the concept was accepted when Linden Square was built following the initial approval process.

The Board said that the proposed obelisks shall not be allowed. The Board said that obelisks would not be appropriate in the public way and would not serve the pedestrian experience.

Mr. Adams said that the obelisk is not the large stake that it is being perceived as. He said that it is small in scale for such a large vehicular area. He said that granite or stone are New England vernacular. He said that it is a modest size piece. He said that the intent is to ground the median and provide pedestrian relief. The Board said that could be accomplished with plant materials.

The Board said that it would only be making a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) regarding the islands. The Board said that approval must come from the BOS.

Mr. Smitka said that Concord, Massachusetts has a stone monument with directions to other towns. He said that something similar could fit in with what is in Wellesley's older neighboring towns.

Mr. Smitka asked if a lane divider or traffic sign would be required. Mr. Adams said that there will not be a lane shift. He said that traffic will go straight through. He said that the turning lane will be lost.

Submittals from the Applicant

Plan Number	Drawing Title	Date of Issue	Prepared By
00A	Index	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
00B	Sign Location Plan	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
01A	Identity at Trellis	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
01B	Identity at Trellis	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
01C	Identity at Trellis	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
02A	Main Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
02B	Main Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
02C	Main Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
03A	Site Entry Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
03B	Site Entry Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
03C	Site Entry Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
04A	Site Tenant Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
04B	Site Tenant Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
04C	Site Tenant Identity	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
05A	Directory Community Board	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
05B	Directory Community Board	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
05C	Directory Community Board	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
06A	Tenant Blade Signage	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
06B	Tenant Blade Signage	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
06C	Tenant Blade Signage	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
07	Existing Starbucks Relocated	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.
08A/B	Entry Markers	5/27/10	Development Design Group, Inc.

On June 9, 2010, the Design Review Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the signage Special Permit with conditions.

On June 16, 2010, the Planning Board reviewed the petition and recommended that the Special Permit be granted with conditions.

Decision

This Authority has made a careful study of the materials submitted and the information presented at the hearing.

It is the opinion of this Authority that improvement of existing property identification signs, installation of two entry identification monument signs, installation of a community directory board, tenant blade signs along the sidewalk façade and wall signs will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of Section XXIIA, Section XIVG and Section XXV of the Zoning Bylaw, as the lettering styles, materials and colors will not detract from the area and are appropriate for this specific location. .

Therefore, a Special Permit is granted for improvement of existing property identification signs, installation of two entry identification monument signs, installation of a community directory board, tenant blade signs along the sidewalk façade and wall signs, subject to the following conditions:

1. Design Review Board comments, as stated in their June 10, 2010 Recommendation, shall be incorporated.
2. There shall be one single uniform design and shape for the blade signs.
3. There shall be a maximum of two signs, one blade sign and one wall sign located on each of the opposite sides of the building near the entrances, per business.
4. There shall be no logos or trademarks on the signs.
5. There shall be no new signage on awnings.
6. Existing signage on awnings may remain but cannot be replaced.
7. The main entry sign shall be no taller than eight inches over the height of the existing brick wall main entry sign.
8. The linden leaf shall be removed from the entry signs.
9. The words, "At Wellesley" shall be removed from the entry signs.
10. There shall be no obelisks on the traffic islands.

The Inspector of Buildings is hereby authorized to issue a permits for the signs upon receipt and approval of a sign applications and any other materials he may require. No signs shall be installed until said permits has been issued.

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APPEALS FROM THIS DECISION,
IF ANY, SHALL BE MADE PURSUANT
TO GENERAL LAWS, CHAPTER 40A,
SECTION 17, AND SHALL BE FILED
WITHIN 20 DAYS AFTER THE DATE
OF FILING OF THIS DECISION IN THE
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK.

Richard L. Seegel, Chairman

Cynthia S. Hibbard

David G. Sheffield

cc: Planning Board
Inspector of Buildings
lrm